

USS AZ_OHC #348_Cliff Farris_06-01-94

Transcription Date: 09/22/09 - Transcriber: RJ

[BEGIN AUDIO]

CLIFF FARRIS: About, during nineteen hundred and forty four, June the fifteenth, I was with the Second Marine Division. We had landed on Red Beach Three and the object was to advance to [SOUNDS LIKE] Garipan, the city of Garipan and take the city. Okay, three or four afternoons, or three or four days after we had left Red Beach Three, it was late in the afternoon and we had received orders to dig in for the night. This meant that we would dig fox holes, dig holes deep enough that we could be secure from tanks running over us and long enough so that we'd be comfortable. Well anyway, I had dug my fox hole for the evening and had my brand new automatic rifle set up for the night and the sergeant came by and he said that he needed someone to go back for water for the squad and I looked at the guys and I saw how tired these guys looked.

INTERVIEWER: Was it still daylight?

CLIFF FARRIS: Yes, it was just before the sun was going down.

INTERVIEWER: So just before sundown you ...

CLIFF FARRIS: Yes, yes. And I ...

INTERVIEWER: You needed to gather up canteens for everyone or how did you do that?

CLIFF FARRIS: No, well what I did was look back, I went back behind the line and they had five gallon cans of water back there so I got my five gallon can of water and I started back and so as I was on my way back to my squad on the front line, I don't know, maybe that I was walking along the edge of a cemetery and as I walked along, I looked up to my right and there was a statue of Christ on the cross ...

INTERVIEWER: This statue.

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CLIFF FARRIS: This statue, yes, yes indeed and as I walked along, well it touched me very much.

INTERVIEWER: Why did that touch you so much?

CLIFF FARRIS: Well, this was the first thing that I had seen that really reminded me of home or anything spiritual to that effect. I had seen all kind of Buddha's that the Japanese had around but this was the only Christ that I had seen.

INTERVIEWER: And you're a Christian?

CLIFF FARRIS: Oh yes indeed, I am. I have great faith in Almighty God and son, Jesus Christ.

INTERVIEWER: Your religion is Baptist?

CLIFF FARRIS: Baptist, yes. And as I walked alone, it touched me very deeply and I said to myself oh, it's only a statue, control yourself but as I walked along and I looked into the eyes of this statue, it touched me so very deeply and not only that but something said to me, into my very heart and soul, this is your last chance to pray. This feeling and this urge were so strong it was so great, that I could not, I could not fight this wheel or this urge, you know? So anyway, I walked up to this statue and I knelt down and I prayed.

INTERVIEWER: Was the battle still raging?

CLIFF FARRIS: The battle yes, yes. The battle was still raging, right.

INTERVIEWER: After you prayed, you picked up the water and then took it back to the men?

CLIFF FARRIS: Well, when I rose to leave, there was a photographer standing there and he told me, he says I'm sorry that I interrupted your solemn moment of prayer. He said, but it was so solemn, he says I just had to have the, take the picture and he asked me if I'd mind that he had taken the picture and I told him of course not and he asked me, he said may I use the picture and I told him I said surely, anyway that you

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would like to use it you may so anyway, he asked me my name and my outfit and so forth and so on. So I went back to my unit on the line. This very night, as I said, God impressed upon my heart and my soul that this was my last time to pray. This was my last chance to pray.

INTERVIEWER: This picture, when did you see it?

CLIFF FARRIS: Oh, when I saw this picture? It was after World War II and I received it in the mail.

INTERVIEWER: Has it been in books?

CLIFF FARRIS: Oh yes, it's been in several magazines and it's been published quite frequently and I've sent pictures of the statue to wherever anyone wanted it. But anyway, Almighty God, He was determined to show me that this was my last chance to pray. During this very night, I was very tired, very sleepy, very exhausted and it must have been some time around midnight I fell asleep and my assistant [INDISCERNIBLE] was, he was shaking me awake and he said to me, he said Farris, you okay? And I told him I said sure, I'm okay, why? He said three [PH] Japs have just left your fox hole. He said they had their bayonets touching you. He says I sent out a prayer and he said the prayer was Dear God, what shall I do? And he said the answer came back nothing and he said that was what he decided he would do. If these Japanese did not bayonet me or did not hurt, damage or hurt me, that he would not kill them. He knew that if he fired, he had an M-1, he had to pull the trigger, you know, to fire one round. He knew that if he fired, I would move and these other two Japs would kill me so we had been in combat a long time and we were very dear friends and he just could not do it. Well anyway, I felt and I told him about my episode with this, I was not praying to the statue, I was praying to God in Heaven of course, but what I was praying also was this. That I know that the Holy Spirit of God was in this area because I felt it from my heart. I know that it was a

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statue that gave me the desire to want to pray. Well, my buddy, he did not fire. The Japs soon left and went on their way. My buddy had been trained, I had been trained that when we see the enemy, when we see the enemy we attack the enemy, we kill the enemy at any time. But on this night, Almighty God controlled my buddy. Not only did He control my buddy, He also controlled those Japs. He had power over these Japs or else those Japs would have killed me.

INTERVIEWER: Now after the war is over and you see this picture, what does that picture mean to you today?

CLIFF FARRIS: What does this picture mean to me today? It is a very special picture.

INTERVIEWER: You brought a copy of that picture here?

CLIFF FARRIS: Oh yes, I did. I wanted to verify, I wanted to find this exact statue of Christ.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you find it?

CLIFF FARRIS: Well, I went back to the locations where I thought we were in battle and I could find no battlefield there so I began to talk with officials on the island and they told me that they believe that the statue of Christ I was looking for was here.

INTERVIEWER: And so when did you come here to find it?

CLIFF FARRIS: Oh I came here late yesterday afternoon.

INTERVIEWER: And when you found it, what did you think?

CLIFF FARRIS: What did I think? I think that I had found a dear friend. It was something that I had never forgotten this statue in all of fifty years, fifty years ...

INTERVIEWER: So when you were planning your trip back to Saipan ...

CLIFF FARRIS: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was this something on your list?

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CLIFF FARRIS: This was number one, this was number one because I do know that God as I said in the beginning, that he had a purpose for this picture right here. I don't know what the purpose was. He could have chose anybody you know, to be there. He put the camera there because there was no cameraman there when I prayed. He could have put anybody there but he did not. He put me there, he put the cameraman there and I feel today this, that Almighty God has seen the picture, he had the picture of this very statue right here. Also, I live today because of this episode. That had I not prayed this night, that those three Japanese would have killed me, I would have died this night. And I have known this all of my life. Well, not all of my life, for fifty years since.

INTERVIEWER: So this has been kind of a pilgrimage for you to come back.

CLIFF FARRIS: Oh my God, yes. I am most thrilled to find this statue of Christ.

INTERVIEWER: Well, we'll have a picture of that and we'll be able to put it on a screen and Mr. Farris, for relating this story to us is one of the more important ones I suspect in your life and being here and seeing it probably brings back a lot of memories.

CLIFF FARRIS: Oh, it definitely does but and this, I do not know all the why's that God wanted the picture made. I do not know why. The only thing I know that he wanted this picture made. Someday maybe I'll know, I'll have all the answers. Today I do not. But today I do know this, that I have been informed that this is the only picture of its kind to ever come out of any battle, any combat, in any war. So I feel that God could have put anybody in this position that I was in. He could have forced him to kneel there and pray but I can truly say that I am most thrilled, I am most proud, I am most honored. I'm just elevated because He chose me for the picture.

INTERVIEWER: Well thank you very much.

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CLIFF FARRIS: You're welcome entirely. But it is really something to be back here, fifty years later and to know that this very statue of Christ is still in good condition ...

INTERVIEWER: Just like your picture.

CLIFF FARRIS: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And just like you.

CLIFF FARRIS: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: You're welcome.

[END AUDIO]